

SEX MARKS THE SPOT IN ADULT VIDEO GAMES

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The player maneuvers the figure of a cavalry officer across the TV screen, trying to avoid a rain of arrows and an occasional cactus ■ the hope of reaching a comely Indian maiden on the other side.

Just another video game? No way.

That's because the officer ■ wearing only boots and a hat, and his intentions are anything but honorable. The player earns points by coupling the male figure with the naked Indian lass as many times as possible without being hit by an arrow.

Welcome to "Custer's Revenge": Sex is about to make its debut in the home video game marketplace.

"Custer's Revenge" is one of three adult video games that a Northridge company called American Multiple Industries plans to release nationwide later this month under the brand name Mystique. Retailing at \$49.95 each—\$10 to \$15 more than the most expensive of conventional video games—all are designed for use on the basic Atari video game system that has sold by the millions over the past few years.

The trio play much like other video games; the difference is in their themes, which are blatantly sexual. "When you score...you score!" boasts the magazine ad that will be appearing in Playboy and Penthouse, among other publications, to help sell the games.

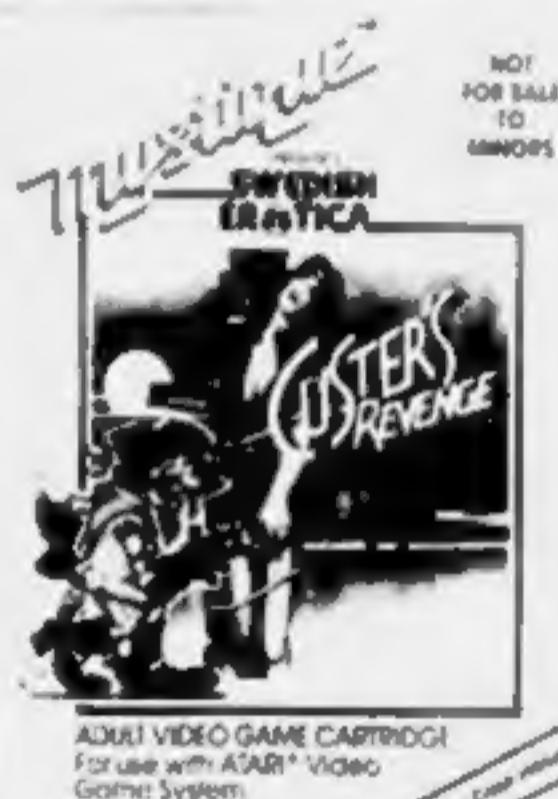
—In "Custer's Revenge," which takes the form of a traditional obstacle game, the naked Custer character is, shall we say, in an obvious state of arousal—which just as obviously fades if he inadvertently runs into a cactus.

—"Bachelor Party" is similar to Atari's "Breakout," in which the player tries to keep a "ball" in play to knock down a wall, but instead of impersonal block figures, ■ uses a

male character to score points by making contact with female characters.

—"Beat 'Em and Eat 'Em" is the raciest of the three—so much so that describing ■ tastefully in a family newspaper is difficult. Suffice ■ to say that the game involves a man on the roof of a building and a woman looking up at him from the street below and is similar to Activision's "Kaboom," in which the player attempts to catch falling objects.

The themes notwithstanding, Stuart Kesten, president of American Multiple Industries, bristled



A Mystique "adult" video game.

during an interview at the suggestion that these are home video's first "X-rated" cartridges. That falsely implies that the Mystique games are pornographic or sexually explicit, he protested, noting that the action is cartoonlike and designed to be fun, not erotic.

"Our object is not to arouse; our object is to entertain," Kesten maintained. "When people play our games, we want them smiling; we want them laughing."

Nevertheless, the packages in

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which the Mystique games are to be sold clearly are labeled "Not for sale to minors" and carry the Swedish Erotica insignia that is well known in the X-rated movie and video-cassette trade.

Kesten said the Swedish Erotica name was licensed from the parent Caballero Control company to help give the games credibility with video outlets that are used to selling the firm's video cassettes. And the warning about not selling the games to minors is simply an exercise of responsibility, Kesten said.

That, after all, is the whole point, Kesten stressed. The problem with most home video games, he contended, is that while adults pay for them, it's generally the kids who play with them.

Kesten, a former marketing executive in the cosmetics industry, created American Multiple Industries about a year ago in partnership with executive vice president Joel Martin, whose background is in toy manufacturing. He said they decided to move into the adult-video-game arena because no one else was pursuing it and distributors and dealers told them there definitely would be a market for such product.

Kesten said he anticipates few problems in getting the games into general circulation, noting that Playboy and Penthouse now are available in most supermarkets. The company hopes to have a total of 750,000 units of the three games on the market before Christmas, he said.

Beyond that, he said, the firm plans to have two dozen adult games on the market by the end of 1983. He emphasized that the adult label refers to themes that are "more mature, but not necessarily sexy."

Kesten acknowledged that parents may want to store the games out of sight of the children, but he added, "If the kids get hold of them, it'll be OK. There's nothing wrong. They're cartoonish; they're tongue-in-cheek adult situations that are not offensive—except to the player when he doesn't score enough points."

He later amended that statement when referring to "Beat 'Em and Eat 'Em." "That game we should perhaps put a lock and key on," he said, apparently only half in jest. "Even the title may not make it into certain stores."